



Reflection by Rev'd Tony Meek

**Christ the King
John 18.33-37
24th November 2024**

For a few years now, this Sunday has been known as the Feast of Christ the King, and certainly all of the lessons have images of kingship and rule, though not necessarily in expected forms. This Sunday stands at the end of the long season of Sundays after Trinity as a summing up of what we've learned about Jesus Christ, and as an introduction to Advent. As today's Gospel shows us, Jesus' kingship is not of this world -- it is far bigger than that and far more glorious. Jesus talks of his kingship with Pilate. Later, Jesus, the king who reigns from the cross, promises the repentant thief that they will be together in Paradise that very day. He has judged the "good thief" worthy of citizenship in his kingdom.

Likewise, Jesus will come at the last day to judge all of us. He will not come naked and bloody and dying, but as Lord of heaven and earth. He will judge us on our behaviour to the poorest and most insignificant person we meet, as if we had done those things to him. That being the case, maybe it is a good idea to take a couple of minutes to look at why we call Christ 'King' in the first place.

Some people think we should throw out the word "king" as a relic of an old, oppressive era, but that is sadly ironic, because in that mystery of Christ's kingship is the root of our liberation.

Christ is King because he is the Son of God. He is both perfect human and perfect God, and because he is God, he is ruler of all that is; sole ruler because God is one. None other is worthy because only the one who created everything has the power of absolute rule over his creation.

Christ is King because he has redeemed all creation, and especially human nature, bringing us the promise of everlasting life and peace. By taking our nature upon himself, he restored in us the image of God, which we had vandalized by our disobedience and self-separation from God. By becoming human, and by taking upon himself not only our nature but the punishment due to us for our sins, Christ restored the God-life in us and peace between us and God.

If this seems a little less directly kingly than the judging and lawgiving, remember that maintaining peace both at home and abroad is also one of the traditional jobs of a king. And isn't Jesus always telling us that God's kingdom is within us, making his role as our restorer and redeemer doubly a kingly one?

Finally, yes, Christ is King because he is law-giver, judge, and the one who executes judgment. He is the source of the Law come among us in our flesh to show us perfect obedience to the Law, and he is the same one who will return at the end of days to be our judge and to carry out the sentence he passes upon us. It is in his mercy as our kinsman in human flesh, as well as our judge and our king that our hope lays. Not easy ideas.

Even the comfortingly familiar picture of the Shepherd is pretty remote from our own experience. But in the next month we will see these ideas and images brought home by the likes of John the Baptist, the wild man prophet of the Jordan, and by Mary, the simple Jewish girl whose "yes" brought God into our flesh in unique commingling.

And finally, at Christmas, our King will come to us in the form of a helpless baby, to explain himself by living where we can see and hear, touch and handle him. For now, however, we are given a hint of his royal majesty that we remain powerless to explain adequately.

Maybe the best we can do on this Feast of Christ the King is to bow in awe and worship, ascribing to him as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, and power, henceforth and forevermore. We could do worse than remember that our Friend and Redeemer will also be our Judge and that what we have done to the least of his brethren, we have done also to him.